

Woman's Work Is Never Done

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reveal only some of the traits of the husband-wife relationship in rural Greece. It is equally important to see how this partnership operates day by day, season by season, year by year, for it is in the sharing of a common life, with its hardships and flashing joys, that this companionship based on mutual respect is fashioned. Great is the wife's satisfaction if her husband is considered a good provider. If he is, people say: "Tes dinei tou pouliou to gala" (He brings the bird's milk to her), or "Kai tou pouliou to gala echei" (She even has the milk of the bird). Such phrases go back to the practice of serving eggs beaten in milk to the sick, thereby showing that good care is being taken. 562
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The wife, in addition to watching her own behavior toward her husband, is also responsible for seeing that the children are respectful. The lessons learned in the younger years tends to persist through adolescence into adulthood. Once while sitting at a meal in a Greek home I noticed the young man leave the table. Curious about his exit, I asked: "Where is Petros going?" The father, with a pleased look on his face, said: "He is going out to smoke a cigarette. He does not smoke in front of me." And wherever I went I asked young men singly or in groups whether or not they smoked in the presence of their fathers and found only a small fraction that broke this taboo. To be sure, in some villages and in some homes the young man no longer takes a trek outside if he wants a smoke, but he knows he is going against an old established custom. In one group of nineteen young men, for instance, only three said they would smoke in front of their fathers; in another group of twenty-eight, again only three said they would do so. 593
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The son also shows respect for his father by not going to the same coffeehouse where his father is or is apt to go, but there are regional variations. In villages of the Pelion (near Volos, Thessaly) a man may take his son or even his wife to the coffeehouse, but in the words of the commandant of gendarmerie there "they may act this way near Volos but in my village in Boeotia it would be a great shame if the father and his son were in the same coffeehouse, and no woman would think of entering." As a general rule, even fewer of the young men would accompany their fathers to a coffeehouse than would smoke in their presence. In some of the smaller villages the people say that they do not have enough cafés and so the possibility of the two generations staying apart is not very great. 593
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But on every hand there are signs that the formal etiquette governing respect is breaking down. One well-informed official near Salonica said, "The basic Greek tradition of showing respect for elders is weakening. Now you see boys teaching their fathers how to play backgammon and cards. In the United States you would think this fine but over here our system is patriarchal, and the young American starts life outside the home at an earlier age." A folklorist pointed out that in the past the reverence for Greek customs was looked on as necessary for national survival, especially under the Turks and when people were isolated. 178
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barco-growing parts of Thrace, a child of six may be expected to help to the extent of his ability. In general, by the time he is five or six, he is asked to watch a younger brother or sister or to watch the sheep or turkeys; when not doing this, he can join children's play groups. By the age of fourteen a boy is already a competent field hand. A girl between eight and ten years of age is given little jobs, but between ten and fourteen she assumes much heavier burdens.

Yet life is not all work. Children in Greece also have their periods of play, frequently under the watchful eye of some woman in whose yard the children's play groups may be found. Some of the children, however, prefer to play away from home — along the street, around a fountain, or at the school yard — so as not to be called upon to do the chores which would be assigned if they were at hand. It is remarkable how many games can be played without toys. Much can be done with stones and little pieces of broken glass (where no marbles are available), and what dolls can be made by little girls from a few nondescript rags! Occasionally I would find two or three barefooted children damming up a stream near some pigs lying in the mud; or boys would roll iron hoops on the highway while their family worked in a field close by. So intent would the children be on their play that they would seem oblivious to approaching buses or autos.

One of the children's games played throughout much of Greece is a form of jacks. In the village of Laimos, near Lake Prespa, the children playing it called it *vroche* (rain) although elsewhere in Greece it is usually referred to as *pentovola*. Instead of using a ball, on whose bounce the jacks must be picked up and the ball caught, the girls threw a stone in the air and picked up other stones in time to catch the one that had been tossed. Pebbles figure also in the game called "forty stones." Eight stones are put in a straight line, with forty on each side of the center. At a signal all must run to a set place and return before the girl called "the gatherer" picks up all of the stones into a pile. If the gatherer wins, she sits on the pile and pretends to be a setting hen.

There are the familiar games of hide-and-seek (only the Greek children spit on the tree serving as home base rather than touch it), drop-the-handkerchief, cat-and-mouse. Many of the games require special songs which the girls especially seem to enjoy. Boys at play seem much less organized and more apt to argue over the fine points of the game.

Quite often we came upon children simply sitting still. "What are you doing?" we asked. "Oh, we are telling riddles." Not all of these we heard would have much meaning to an outsider, but some of them had almost a universal touch:

My lamb, my little curly lamb, climbs, eats, and gets fed on grass, drinks water, and dies. (A fire on the mountain.)

Around, around it's round and in the middle it is long. (A well.)

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- 524 My master bought me, undressed me, cut off my head, and then as he was chopping me he felt sorry and started crying. (An onion.)

FOOD AND CLOTHING

- 252 Since fuel is so scarce throughout most of the country, fire is used for cooking only when absolutely necessary. Many families still do their cooking in the open fireplace, but many more use small sheet-metal stoves. The husband, when he has caught up on his other jobs, brings the fuel to the house by donkey from the village forest or from some mountainside where the holm-oak shrubs grow, but the wife may also help in this task from time to time.

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[178] If she can, the wife persuades her husband to build a brick and mud stove, which raises the cooking surface high enough to avoid stooping. In fact, a good indication of progress in a Greek village home is the height of the stove. Only a few kettles or pans exist where the fireplace is used for cooking, but metal casseroles are required for modern stoves with ovens. 264 Even in those homes where cooking arrangements border on the primitive, a meal is served on clean, white tablecloths, with napkins and whatever dishes and cutlery the family can afford.

- 262 The food varies considerably by geographical region and by season. But everywhere one finds, in the words of Dorothy Lee, that "traditionally, food [261] is not nutrition. Food is good, not good for you." * Therefore, when we describe the Greek diet as consisting of 2477 calories per day as compared with the United States figure of 3129, we are talking nutrition, not food. 146 Or when we break these calories down according to their sources, as in 262 Table 3, we are following a Western, not a Greek villager's, approach. No-

TABLE 3. SOURCES OF CALORIC INTAKE,
GREECE AND UNITED STATES, 1948-49

Food group	Percentage of calories	
	Greece	United States
Cereals	61	25
Potatoes	2	3
Sugar and honey	4	15
Pulses and nuts	6	3
Vegetables and fruits	5	6
Meat, fish, and eggs	3	19
Dairy products	4	14
Oils and fats	15	15
	100	100

Source: Adapted from Leland G. Allbaugh, *Creta: A Case Study of an Underdeveloped Area* (Princeton, 1953), p. 132.

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[776] considered so real that many villagers going outdoors after dark take both
[784] a light and a cross for protection. Nor should one do any washing of
[296] clothes during the Twelve Days, go to the fields to work, borrow from a
[241] neighbor, or believe in the efficacy of dreams since they will not come
true at this time.*

After the Emmanuels have had their nameday on the twenty-sixth and
[426] the Stephens theirs on the twenty-seventh, the women start preparing the
[787] traditional New Year's Eve dishes. On the thirtieth special attention is given
to the baking of the *vasilopita*, a special cake named in honor of Saint
[262] Basil (Hagios Vasilis), a very important figure. A coin has been placed in
the cake, on the top of which the date of the year is written. Chestnuts and
almonds are used for decorations.

[533] On New Year's Eve, throughout the day, the children go around carol-
ing again much as they did on Christmas Eve, but on this occasion it is
[824] St. Basil's kalenda. The children carry a highly decorated branch of the
[777] sorb-tree or sometimes the olive with which they tap people on the
[431] shoulder in order to wish them good luck during the year. In return they
expect a gift such as dried fruit. The youngsters add a festive air to the
[796] day and help build up the emotional crescendo that becomes quite evident
[777] as evening approaches — everyone is anxious to find out what their luck
will be for the coming year. Excitement is particularly keen around mid-
night with the cutting of the *vasilopita*; first, the head of the house cuts a
piece of this cake for the Virgin, then one for the house, then one for the
job that the head of the house does, then his own piece to be followed by
one for his wife and each child in turn. Everyone is curious to find out in
what piece the lucky coin will turn up. Should it be in the Virgin's piece,
it will be placed on the household shrine, but if any member of the family
finds it in his piece he feels fortunate indeed.

[431] If the family members exchange any gifts, it is done at this special event
[524] on New Year's Eve and not at Christmas. In Northern Greece especially
the villagers play cards to test their luck. If anyone loses he is apt to say,
"If I lose at cards, I'll win during the year." Those who win say, "I'll be
lucky."

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[788] The devout go to the New Year's Day church service at which the
[574] liturgy of St. Basil is employed, and when they come home they are care-
ful to step into the house with their right foot; if they have brought a new
icon from the church, the one carrying it will step into the house first. Dur-
ing the day the men pay calls on such village notables as the community
president, the priest, the doctor, or the schoolteacher and are served wine
with a sort of canape. The women, dressed in their very best, serve the
guests. Students, soldiers, and others away from home try to get back to
[524] their village for at least a two- or three-day visit. On New Year's Day the
card games are taken up again.

275 earth-shaking political event would call forth a variety of opinions forcefully expressed.

571 A second attraction is drinking with one's friends. According to Photiadis:¹
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[273] The alcoholic or non-alcoholic beverages tend to contribute to a considerable degree to the attraction of the coffeehouse, even though the men can drink all they want in their own homes. *Ouzo*, the alcoholic drink, is drunk only in the coffeehouse. When asked why they don't drink it at home and save money, they will answer that "*ouzo* is drunk only with good company."

275 It is interesting to remember what has already been pointed out: that a son is customarily supposed to visit a coffeehouse in which his father is not likely to be found. Although "times are changing," a breach of this custom throughout much of rural Greece would still be considered disrespectful. 576
593 It may have some connection with the fact that a father, who is supposed to set a good example before his son, might find his storytelling or his convivial drinking dampened if a son were present. This is why, in village after village, where there are almost always three coffeehouses, one is favored by the old men, another by the middle-aged, and the third by the young people. Informants will say that the young people will go to their coffeeshop because one can listen to phonograph records, watch the girls pass by, or play noisy games that the older men might not tolerate. The real reason for differentiation may lie in the older traditions which originated in the men's desire to drink with their friends and equals. Photiadis in his study points out how the Greek peasant during his hours at work looks forward eagerly to the time of day when he can go "to the coffeehouse to meet his friends, have a few drinks, and continue this cycle again and again."

275 A third source of pleasure in the coffeehouse is the games. Playing for drinks is common with the loser paying for them. Very rarely do they play for money since it is prohibited by law. Sometimes they become involved in a game quite emotionally and when the game is over they eagerly look forward to the next meeting. A good card player is well-known and therefore is always surrounded by others watching him. Quarrels sometimes go along with the game. Characteristic is the sarcasm of the winner, or perhaps the participants, which tends to raise their emotions.
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In addition to various kinds of card games, backgammon is commonly played. Once in a while one sees a chess game in progress.

275 A fourth and very important attraction of the coffeehouse is the availability of the recent newspaper and a radio. As Photiadis says:
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207 Non-farmers or part-time farmers stop to listen to the early news before they go to their work. During the day the older men sit for many hours in the coffeehouse listening to the radio. In the busy coffeehouse the early part of the eve-

¹[Who described the Northern Greek village of Stravroupolis - ANALYST]